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ABSTRACT

A study of school use and community and professional interaction in a New York school complex evaluated the nature of a community controlled school demonstration project's contact with parents, community, and service organizations on a daily basis. Focus was on the interactions which took place within the school buildings. Three data collection techniques were used: a visitor's survey, an afternoon and evening mapping survey (observational techniques), and the use of archival data, primarily administrative calendars. The data revealed not only a quantitative difference between school complexes, with greater participation seen in this district, but a qualitative difference as well in the visitors' purposes. Parents became more aware of their educational rights and responsibilities, and community professionals were active in the schools. There were many ongoing activities and repeated instances of parents and teachers working together and recognizing the overlap in their goals for children. (Author/LH)

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COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN THE I.S. 201 SCHOOL COMPLEX

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ABSTRACT: A study was done investigating school use and community and professional interaction in the I.S. 201 school complex. The quality and quantity of interaction is reported and discussed.

Abstract

Community Involvement in the I. S. 201 School Complex

Marilyn Rothenberg

A study was done investigating school use and community and professional interaction in the I. S. 201 school complex. The study was undertaken in an effort to evaluate the nature of a community controlled school demonstration project's contact with parents, community and service organizations on a daily basis. The study focused on the interactions which took place within the school buildings.

Three techniques were used in collecting data. The two observational techniques consisted of: 1) a visitors survey; and 2) an afternoon and evening mapping survey. The third was the use of archival data, primarily administrative calendars.

Two school complexes, one inner city and one suburban, were similarly surveyed in an attempt to establish base line data.

The visitors survey data are analyzed comparatively. The afternoon and evening survey and archival records are descriptively discussed.

The data revealed not only a quantitative difference between school complexes, with greater participation seen in the I. S. 201 district, but a qualitative difference as well in the visitors' purposes.

Introduction

This study was indertaken in an effort to assess the extent of community involvement in the I.S. 201 complex. The intent was not to focus directly on the decision-making power structure, but rather to examine the quantity and nature of the school's contact with parents, community and service organizations on a daily and continuous basis.

The recent move to decentralized school districts in New York City has been a response to the feeling that a vast centralized school system has inherent difficulties in meeting the needs of varied communities. The attempt to replace a dichotomized situation in which institution and community alternate in accusing the other of being the major blame for children's failures poses many questions. What constitutes effective decentralization? Is there an optimal size of district to be sought in order to meet the needs of the elements of New York's complex mosaic? Specifically, can a complex such as I.S. 201, composed of an intermediate school and four elementary schools direct and unify its community resources to facilitate the education of its youngsters? The I.S. 201 experiment is relatively new for any definitive conclusions to be drawn, but an indication of direction can perhaps be seen at this time.

Ideally, a study of community involvement would benefit from sampling interaction over time. In fact, this study was initiated in the spring of 1971 in response to a decision made by a city board of education to evaluate a community controlled school demonstration project. Therefore this study took place during the last two months of the school year. Typically this is a low ebb time for extra-curricular activities, parental involvement and tutorial programs, as most of these programs conclude prior to the last weeks of the regular school year. Although this factor must be considered, the timing of this study enables a view of the extent of the tenacity and viability of programs to continue despite the "end of the year" syndrome.

The aim of this study was to evaluate aspects which were considered important to the community school board as well as to the larger city board of education. This study focused on the varied use of the school building. An assessment of who entered the school building and for what purpose provided the major data.

PART I

Method: Visitors' Survey

Schools: A survey was made in the I.S. 201 school complex. A survey was conducted in comparison school districts as well, in order to establish base line data.

The I.S. 201 complex was comprised of an intermediate school which extended to grade eight and four feeder schools, which were either primary or elementary schools. The total school enrollment was 3,189 pupils.

The inner-city comparison schools consisted of two elementary schools. The total enrollment was 1,300 pupils. Attempts were made to secure a larger sample, but were not fruitful. In addition to usual field study difficulties, black communities have been repeatedly researched and are understandably reluctant. A further constraint was that of limited time, as the study had to be completed within the last two months of the school year.

I.S. 201 and the comparison schools, which will be referred to as the inner-city comparison schools, were of similar racial and socio-economic populations. Both complexes were located in Harlem.

A visitors' survey was also conducted in a middle class white suburban district. It must be stressed that there was no attempt to compare populations. The purpose of the records was solely to probe the use pattern in a district which fits the description of community control. Of the five schools surveyed,

two schools were primary (K-3), two schools were upper elementary grades (4-6) and one school was a junior high, grades (7-9). The total enrollment was 3,416.

Procedure:

The visitors' survey was made for each of five randomly selected days. A community member was posted at the entry to the building and asked each visitor to sign the record sheet as he or she entered and left the building. The record consisted of the person's name, address, purpose, time of entry and exit. this was a relatively unobtrusive measure as most schools had formerly required visitors to sign in, in some form (see Form A).

Results:

Table I shows the proportion of visitors in each school grouping. This figure was obtained by totaling the number of visitors to the school for the five randomly chosen days and dividing this amount by the total school enrollment. It is important to note again that the study took place the last two months of the school year. The proportion of visitors at I.S. 201 was .26, or over four times the amount recorded at the inner-city comparison schools (.05) or suburban schools (.06).

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN I.S. 201 SCHOOL COMPLEX

I. Proportion of Visitors[1]

I.S. 201	Inner-City Comparison Schools	Suburban Schools
.26	.05	.06

[1] Total number of visitors for five days divided by total school enrollment

II. Percentage of Total Visitors at each School, Classified by Stated Purpose

	1 Parent/ Child	2 Organizational/ Parent	3 Parent/ Re: Child	4 Health	5 Professional	6 Other
I.S. 201	.49	.10	.10	.02	.16	.13
Inner City Comparison Schools	.07	.07	.36	0	.14	.36
Suburban Schools	.52	.20	.09	.02	.09	.08

Table II categorizes the visitors in terms of their expressed purpose. An explanation of each category would be helpful, before a discussion of the implications of these percentages.

Column 1, titled Parent/Child, includes visits by parents to deliver or take a child from school or bring an item to the child. This category accounts for a larger proportion in primary or elementary schools.

Column 2, titled Organizational/Parent, includes parents' visits that were not specific to one child. This category included parents who came to observe a class unit, P.T.A. meetings, parent education, as well as parents who came to help in any capacity.

Column 3, titled Parent/Re: Child, includes only parental visits for which the stated purpose was to discuss their child with the teacher, principal or special service teacher. These visits were generally pre-arranged.

Column 4, titled Health, includes community members availing themselves of health services. It does not include health meetings or examinations given to children routinely.

Column 5 includes any professional entering the building. These were generally from fields of medicine or education. Educational visits from teachers or administrators associated with other schools constitute a part of this count, as do intra-complex staff visitations.

Column 6, titled Other, is a category which includes personal visits, office visits, as well as visits for which the purpose was not explicit.

Categories 1 and 2 give some indication of the ease with which parents enter the school, as many visits were without appointments. Column 1 accounts for a large percentage of the visitors to I.S. 201 and the suburban schools. (Column 1 accounts for forty-nine percent of the visitors to I.S. 201 and fifty-two percent of the visitors to the suburban schools.) Note the low percentage (seven percent) in the inner-city comparison schools despite the fact that these

schools are elementary level. In the I.S. 201 complex, particularly in the elementary and primary schools, many parents entered the building and classroom when walking a child to and from school. This activity was not only permitted, but explicitly encouraged. In one primary school the principal was concerned that our study might impede the parents' entry.

In many instances, parents spent some time in the child's classroom observing or helping. On occasion parents took the responsibility of waiting until the teacher arrived in the morning. Frequently, people in this category stayed beyond ten minutes. This might have been interpreted as a classroom visit, but the categorizations were based on each visitor's stated purpose.

In the suburban schools the greatest frequency in category 1 was comprised of parents coming in during the school day to bring items for the children, i.e., notebooks, sneakers, homework, trip money, or to call for children to take them to medical, dental or religious appointments.

Another interesting category was the third one in which parents had come to school to speak with staff members concerning their children. The high frequency for this category in the inner-city comparison schools, thirty-six percent compared with ten percent in I.S. 201 and nine percent in the suburban schools, suggests a more dichotomous parent/staff relationship than in I.S. 201 or the suburban schools. These visits were usually requested by school personnel and requently concerned a child's performance in behavior or academics. This high percentage seemed to indicate little communication between school and parents except when a child experienced difficulty.

It is difficult to account for the high frequency in column 6 for the inner-city schools. These visits may have been personal. It is also possible that there was a reluctance to complete the form. One assistant principal in these schools had warned me that the survey might not be completed. She felt that by the time parents come into school they might be "too angry" to

sign anything.

Discussion:

Both the total proportion of visitors and the categorical view of visitors' purposes contribute to an understanding of the process in I.S. 201. The educators' frequent claim that ghetto parents do not care and don't involve themselves in their children's education needs further scrutiny. Despite the power struggles inherent in the situation this Harlem community has responded to the idea of a community school and the school/community boundary has blurred.

Particularly in the primary and elementary grades the easy access and informal face-to-face contact between parents and staff in I.S. 201 encouraged continuous awareness of children's progress. This may be an important factor in explaining the difference illustrated by category 3. Parents and teachers have many casual meetings and therefore parents are not summoned to school in an emergency manner to discuss their child's behavioral or academic failure.

Teachers/parent interaction also eased the transition from home to school for the young child. Not only did parents walk their children into their classroom, but they frequently remained to observe. The parent was able to become aware of the teacher's goals as well as how these goals could be supported beyond the school day. The encouragement of parental involvement contributed to parent and teacher recognizing the overlap in their goals for the children.

An indication of the willingness on the part of parent and teacher to cooperate could be seen in the casual meeting, as well as in the organizational interaction which was provided. Training was provided for parents and they entered the school to participate with multi-media and manipulative materials.

An interesting note here is that classroom helpers (paid and unpaid) were drawn from all socio-economic strata. Typically parents with limited educational backgrounds are hesitant to participate or even enter the schools.

Children who might suffer the greatest disparity between home and school climates frequently do not experience their parents' participation in the schools. Parentally written phrases on the survey form, which illustrated a lack of ease with the written language, seemed to indicate that this institutional prejudice was not operative. The opportunity for parent and community education to take place simultaneously with the child's education should not be overlooked.

Parental involvement in the schools can easily lead to conflict either through a difference in goals or misunderstandings. The administrations in these schools felt that parents had the right to know and understand how their children were being educated. Great effort was expended in this direction. In I.S. 201, the intermediate school itself, staff and administration, in an attempt to involve parents held a "teach-out." This entailed bringing many children, desks, typewriters, science material, out in the streets to further make the school program accessible to parents.

An important aspect of the greater use of the school building by parents and professionals was the opportunity for youngsters to see purposeful adults engaged in working towards the community's educational, social and physical well being.

Intra-complex interaction, included in the professional visitor category, led to particular benefit. Children had the opportunity to see, for example, the principal of the intermediate school they would be attending. This personal involvement could tend to ease the transition to the larger departmental school. This cohesiveness can have further benefit. A complex with interaction between schools has the possibility of supporting the schools which might flounder within a hierarchical structure in which directives are one way, with little opportunity for feedback.

This study attempted to evaluate community involvement in a particular five school inner-city complex. The data indicated that there was a mutual

school and community benefit.

PART II

The entire study was originally designed in three parts. The first part was the visitors' survey; the second, an afternoon and evening survey of school use; the third, a use of archival data, primarily principals' calendars, to illustrate the range of contacts between the schools and community and service groups.

All three school complexes felt that the end of the year was not the optimum time to assess extra-curricular activities. Further, all principals claimed that their calendars did not adequately record all their contacts, nor were their calendars sufficiently preserved to be meaningful.

The study was completed as planned, but due to the lack of people using the schools, the scanty records, and the strong feeling that this time of year was atypical, a decision was made not to use the data from the comparison schools.

Despite the lack of comparative data, the data from the I.S. 201 complex was deemed sufficiently interesting to be discussed descriptively. Here too, however, it is important to recognize that the staff considered the timing non-optimal and the records incomplete.

Method:

The after school and evening surveys were made by an investigator who visited each school between 3:30p.m. and 4:30p.m. in the afternoon and between and between 7:30 and 8:30p.m. in the evening. The investigator observed each room in the school as well as outdoor areas, recording the nature of the ongoing activity, number of people involved and the room used. This was done on five randomly chosen days in May.

Results:

Table III denotes the numbers of community members, adults and children using the school buildings after-school hours, the enrollment in each building and their proportion to aid comparison.

TABLE III. AFTER-SCHOOL BUILDING USE IN THE I.S. 201 COMPLEX

School	I.S. 201	C.S. 30 & 31	P.S. 68	P.S. 133	Total
Frequency*	635	189	712	582	
Enrollment	1,215	832	586	556	
Proportion	.52	.11	1.21	1.05	.66

*Frequency represents all building users, including children and adults.

All the schools had afternoon and evening centers open to the community. Custodians and program directors all felt that the last month of school was not an adequate time for this study as no center was operating at peak capacity. Despite this a range of ongoing activities was manifest. All schools had adult and youth groups. The ages of the children determined to some extent the times of maximum use. For example, the primary schools, as might be expected, had more afternoon participation by children. A summary of the activities at each school will clarify Table III.

I.S. 201 was open five hours each day for their afternoon and evening center. The activity was recreational and tutorial. In addition, approximately twelve classrooms were used by the Malcolm King College on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings. This school was open on Saturday (not reported in

Table IV) and used from 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. by the Black Student Organization and from 7:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. by the Organization of Black Men. The Jazz Mobile met every Saturday from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.. This is a music program in which approximately 200 participated. Friday evening was a program evening. One Friday there were 17 youngsters decorating the gym in the afternoon and 250 in attendance at the school prom in the evening.

C. S. 30 and 31 had a combined afterschool center from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. daily. They were also open from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. daily using 3 classrooms, 2 special rooms and the gym. The activities seen here were recreational and painting during the afternoons. In the evening there were language classes and meetings.

At P. S. 68 there was an afternoon center from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. during which time there were indoor and outdoor recreational groups, arts and crafts classes and an African dance class each week. In the evening from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. there were recreational activities including ping pong, basketball practice and music programs using the yard, cafeteria and auditorium.

At P. S. 133 there was a daily afternoon play center from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. in which the yard, game room and gym were used. The Evening Community center was open from Monday through Thursday using the yard, cafeteria, gym and game room. Adult Education met from 7:00 - 10:00 p.m. each Monday. In addition the school was open from 5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. for basketball practice. This school also had a weekend center every Saturday afternoon.

Discussion:

Even these limited data on the afternoon and evening centers at each of the schools illustrate that the school buildings were vital community centers. Considering custodial statements that this was seen by them to be a limited end of year program

not indicative of their peak enrollment, a viability of program extending beyond the school day was evidenced. The school activities were so diverse that they encouraged participation by varied individuals. There were some highly structured organizational groups with attendance by membership, as well as an open center available to people on a more casual attendance basis.

Administrators' Calendars

Method:

Administrative calendars covering the school year were requested from principals and assistant principals. Records were made of these calendars in order to complement the collected data with names of groups of individuals seen over time.

Results:

The administrators' calendars were personal records kept for their own use and quite diverse in terms of style, content, detail and completeness. It was therefore not feasible to compute a frequency or comparative tabulation. The range of activities and organizational representatives seen does, however, provide a varied fabric illustrating the community, professional and school integration. These were drawn primarily from administrators' calendars at I. S. 201, C. S. 30 and C. S. 31. Calendars were not available at P. S. 68 and due to the change of principals at P. S. 133, only the assistant principal's calendar was available.

Table IV is offered as a partial listing of the administrators meetings. Repeated visits were not indicated. What is shown is a limited sample of the community and professional nature of the schools' operation. Meetings with students, parents and teachers were an integral part of each administrator's day in addition to the above listed activities. Most meetings took place in the school building although some were held elsewhere and after school hours. The range is self-explanatory and indicative of the district's efforts toward meeting the needs of the total child as well as community.

TABLE IV. Illustrative Range of Principal/Community Contacts

Civic and Service Organizations	Educational	Medical	Within School Functions
Urban League	Smith College Students	Hospital of Joint Diseases	Key Teachers Meeting
Percy Sutton Club	Day School - Tom Mansfield	Mt. Sinai Community Medicine Team	Graduation Prom
Community News Service	Harlem Prep Graduation	Harlem Health Center re: Drug Program	Spring Festival
Haryou Act	Bank Street College Paraprofessionals	N. Y. Medical College	Staff Conference
Sister and Black News	Dr. Corwell Education Professor	Dr. Adair, District Health Officer	Dance - Concert
Ford Foundation	District Planners, Philadelphia Board of Education	Connie Rogers Complex Health Program Coordinator	Band Concert
Bambosa Studio	Japanese Educators	Dept. of Health	Parent Meetings
Community Education Center	Board of Education	Americans for Children's Relief	Graduation
Operation Total Family	Brooklyn Academy of Music	Speech and Hearing Conference, Harlem Hospital	Teaching - Interview
Salvation Army	Administration Conference	Harlem Narcotics Project	P. T. A. Meeting
WRFM Interview	Park East High School	Nutritional Field Students and Professor from Columbia University	Teacher Observations
Association of Black Social Workers	N. Y. U. Education Supervisor		Parent-Teacher Conference of Trainable Mentally Retarded
Kwelli (C. E. E. newspaper)	Bureau of Educational Research		
Reverend Kanouse	College Supervisor of Paraprofessionals		
Harlem Corps	Multi-media Staff of C. E. E.		
Lt. Cassels of the Police Department	Dr. Gattegno		
James and Johnson Community Center	Dr. Gadlin re: Parent Self Help Clinic		
	Emerson School (early childhood program)		
	Malcolm King College		
	Educational Research Service		
	Harlem Research Center		
	Model Cities Educational Unit		
	District Reading Coordinators		
	Benjamin Franklin High School		
	Upward Bound		
	New Dimensions Company (Social Studies Materials)		

Not apparent from Table IV is the intra-complex coordination evidenced on the individual calendars. There were staff visitations and meetings, as well as visits to other school functions involving students.

The efforts of the staff of each school to involve the community and enable them to profit from these schools' experiences were manifest. Many fliers were sent home on a variety of topics from entertainment and lunch programs to health programs. Bulletin boards were also used to inform the school users of varied programs and health projects.

In an attempt to demonstrate the school program to the community, I. S. 201 had a "Teach Out" on May 12, 1971. Desks and chairs were arranged on the school mall and on the street. Classes in math, English, literature, typing, French and biology were held outside, as were music and art lessons. Twenty to thirty parents observed the lessons while other community members were listening to the music.

Discussion:

Table IV lists an impressive array of contacts. Although any program resulting from these meetings would need to be evaluated separately, the atmosphere of interest vested in the community's well-being is manifest. The data on the visitors' survey indicating that the professionals from health fields not only met with administrators, but had ongoing programs with the parents strengthens the view that more than superficial contacts were being made. Furthermore, programs made available to the children in school have greater opportunities for effective action when reinforced at home.

Articulation between the elementary schools and between the elementary and intermediate schools as well is important educationally and socially to enable a smooth transition. The care taken with the home to school transition is again evidenced in the move from elementary to intermediate school. In addition to the curricula flow, the sight of a familiar face can be comforting to a youngster moving from a 400-pupil school to a 1,200-pupil school.

Summary Discussion:

When the effects of school use and field contacts are combined, what does this mean to the total community? What difference does the operation of the 201 complex make to all those involved in it? The complex was hardly free from problems and disappointments, but there are qualitative and quantitative indications that the community has been approached in a very vital manner and has responded. There are many people in the schools, many ongoing activities and repeated instances of parents and teachers who work together and recognize the overlap in their goals for children.

An awareness was created for the adults in the community that they had the right to enter the school and a responsibility to participate in the education of their youngsters. Adults were enabled to see themselves as useful to the community. For many, the attendance at adult programs offered an opportunity for self growth. For the children there was evidence that the school was seen as a vital part of their lives. Many used the schools for hours beyond the school day and participated in varied activities. An important aspect of the use of the school by parents and professionals was the opportunity for youngsters to see purposeful models of behavior engaged in working toward the community's educational, social and physical well-being. Also important, perhaps necessary, to youngsters is the aspect of community involvement that narrows the disparity between home and school.

In many ways there was more work for the teacher. The work, however, was shared and their goals were supported. When a young, black P. T. A. president was able to say that the children have been working hard because they know their parents and teachers have been, that is an intrinsic reward for teachers that is not too frequently given in the inner city. The cohesiveness of this complex has further benefit. There has always been disparity between individual schools. Some staffs seem able to reach the community and the children benefit. Some, for whatever complex reasons, are alienating. A complex with interaction between schools has

the possibility of supporting the schools who might flounder within a hierarchical structure where directives are one-way with little opportunity for feedback.

The extent of face-to-face contact between parent and staff is most encouraging. It offers repeated opportunity for mutual understanding to replace the anonymity and alienation of a large city. It offers the opportunity for staff growth and parental education. The repeated visits to the classroom enables parents to view professionals working with the children so that they become aware of how to help their youngster succeed in his pursuits. It further enables the staff to view students with a fuller awareness of them as individuals with a life beyond the school.

This is a complex situation which cannot be reduced to a simple statistic. One can only look at the available signs that an atmosphere was created that could offer the means for establishing rapport between institution and community. For all the trials and tribulations, some hope was offered by this community complex.

1) Name	2) Address	3) Sex M	3) Sex F	4) Purpose	5) Person(s) you wish to see	6) Appointment Yes	6) Appointment No	7) Child in School Yes	7) Child in School No	8) Time enter	9) Time leave	10) Was purpose satisfied Yes	10) Was purpose satisfied No	11) Person(s) seen	12) Other information
				FORM A											